"Think TB"

What is TB? "TB" is short for a disease called tuberculosis. TB is spread by tiny germs that can float in the air. TB germs may spray into the air if a person with *TB disease* of the lungs or throat coughs, shouts, or sneezes. Anyone nearby can breathe TB germs into their lungs and get a *TB infection.*

How do I know if I have a TB infection? A skin test is the only way to tell if you have a *TB infection*. You can have a *TB infection* without feeling sick. The germs are sleeping in your lungs. You can take medicine to keep the germs from growing. If you don't take medicine, the TB germs may begin to grow and cause TB disease. If you have TB disease you need to take medicine to cure your TB. A nurse will bring you the medicine and the health department will pay for it.

How does the skin test work? The test is usually done on the arm. A small needle is used to put some testing material under the skin. In two or three days, a health care worker will check to see if there is a reaction to the test. The test is "positive" if a bump about the size of a pencil eraser or bigger appears on your arm. This bump means you probably have a *TB infection* and need to visit a doctor.
Staff at this center can help you get a TB test. The test if free and confidential.

How do I know if I have TB disease in my lungs? An X-ray of your chest can tell if there is damage to your lungs from TB. Phlegm ("flem") you cough up can also be tested to see if the TB germs are in your lungs. If you have *TB disease* in your lungs, you may:

- Feel weak
- Lose your appetite
- Have a fever

- Cough up phlegm ("flem"), mucus or blood
- Lose weight
- Sweat a lot at night

How does HIV infection affect TB? HIV helps TB germs make you sick by attacking the germ fighters in your body. If you are infected with HIV and with TB germs, you have a very big chance of getting *TB disease.* Talk to your health care worker about getting an HIV test. If you have HIV infection, get tested for *TB infection* at least once a year.

For more information, contact the Maine TB Control Office in Augusta at 1-800-821-5821 or (207) 287-5194 or visit the Maine DHS, Bureau of Health's Division of Disease Control website at http://www.mainepublichealth.gov